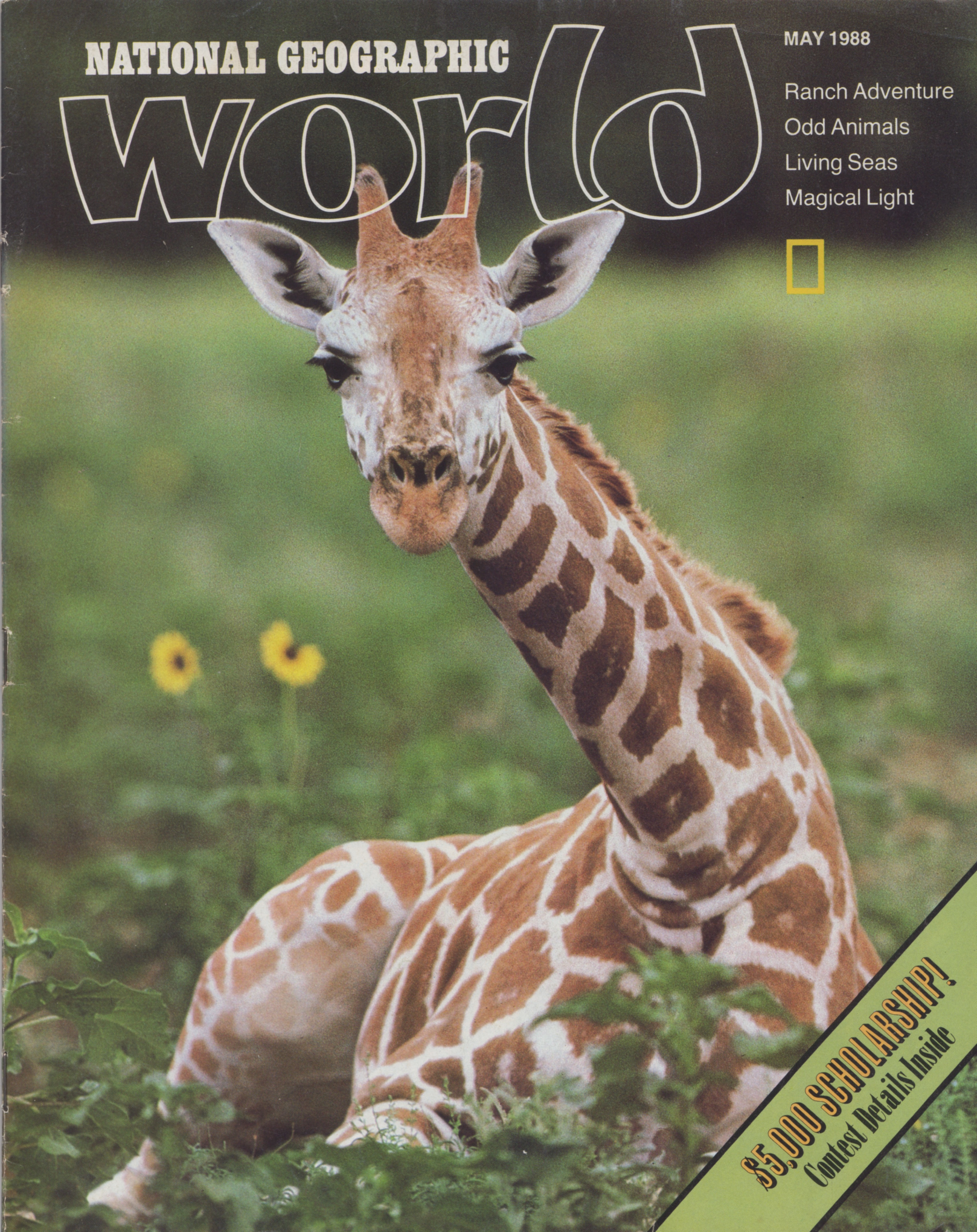
NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

world

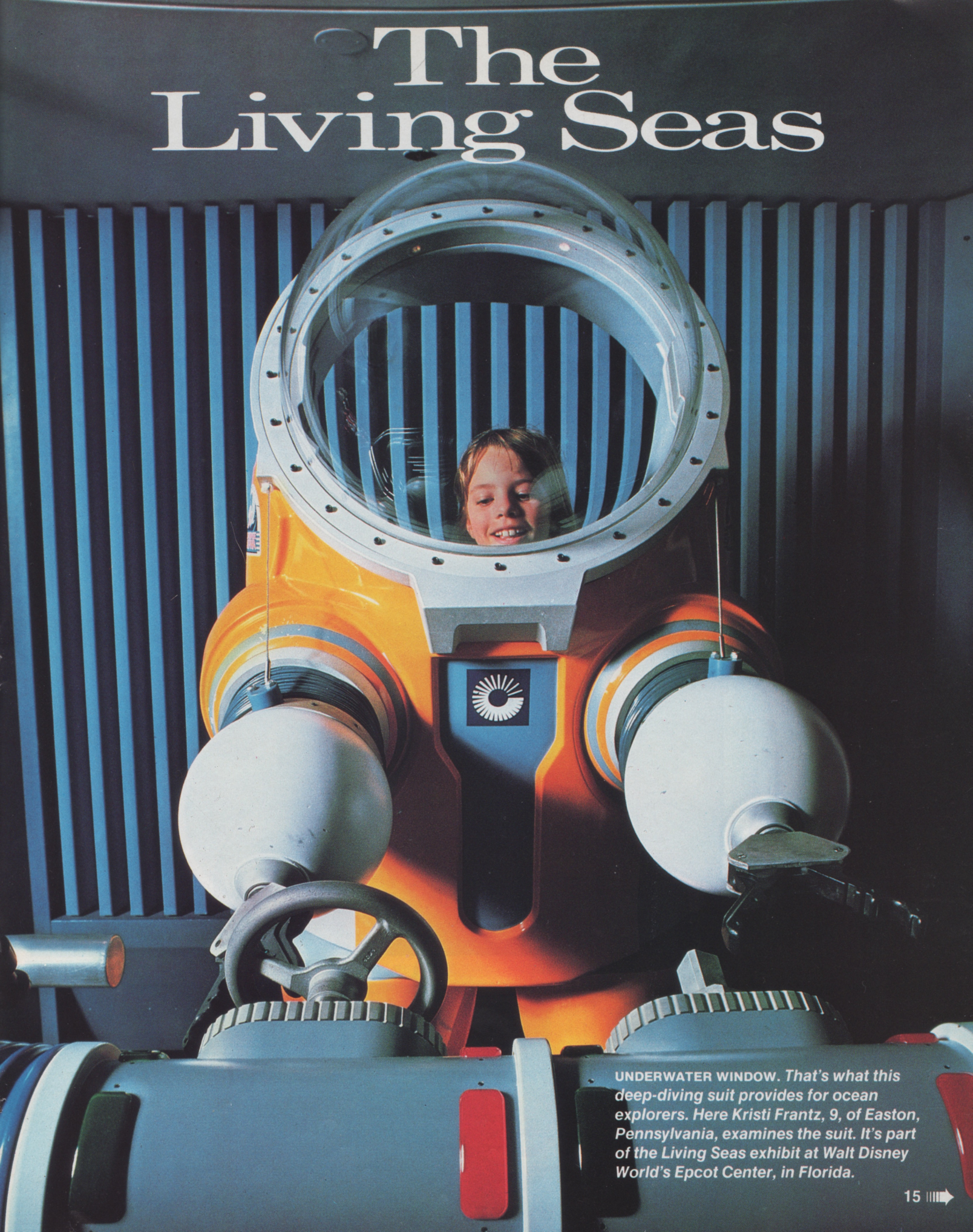
MAY 1988

Ranch Adventure
Odd Animals
Living Seas
Magical Light



$5,000 SCHOLARSHIP!
Contest Details Inside

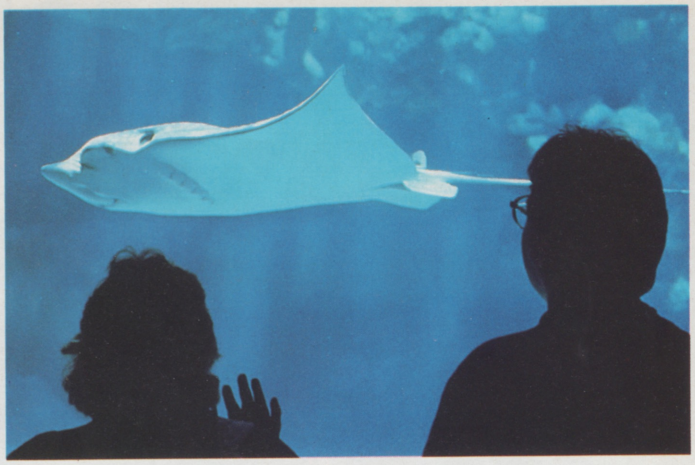
The Living Seas



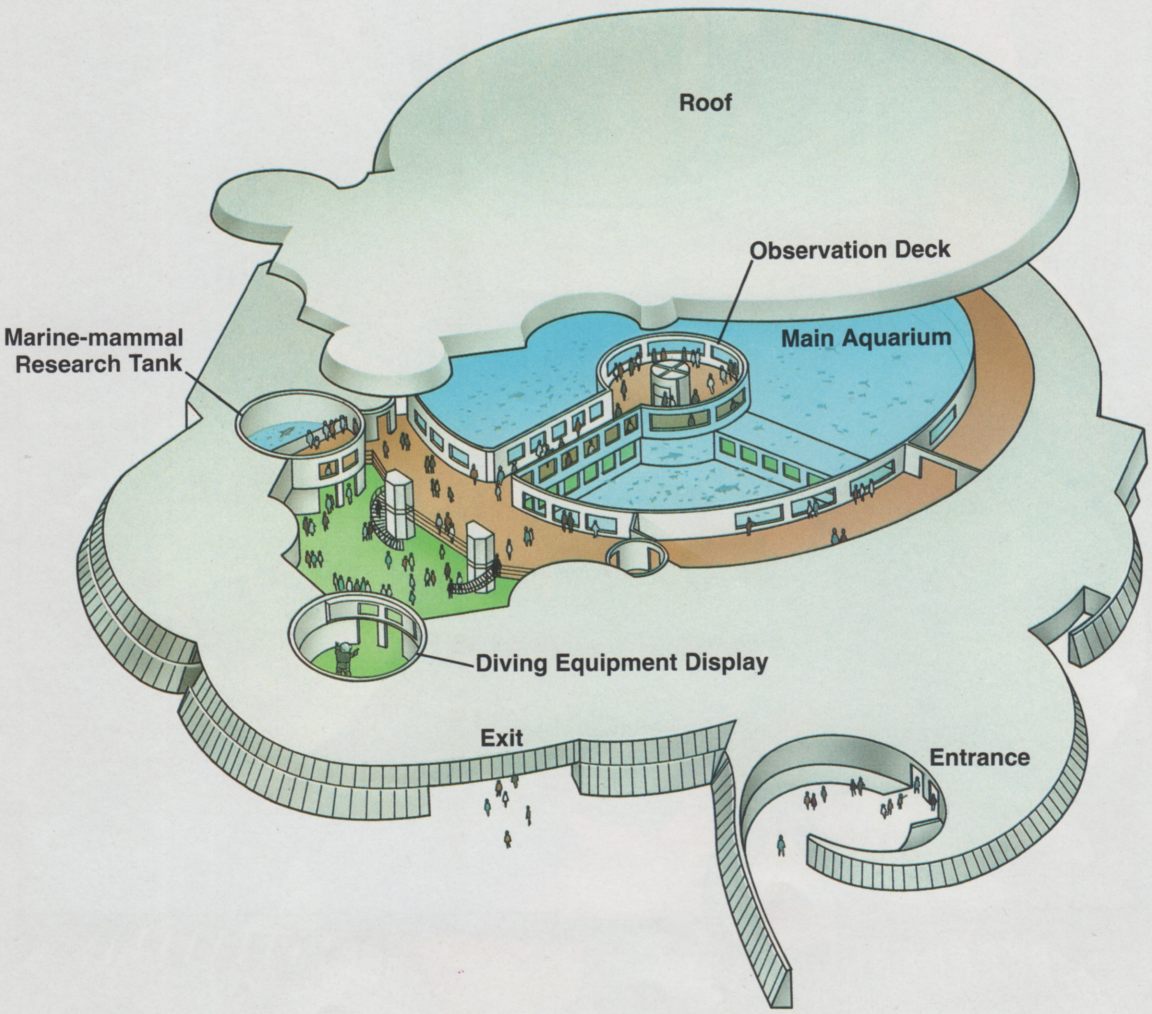
UNDERWATER WINDOW. *That's what this deep-diving suit provides for ocean explorers. Here Kristi Frantz, 9, of Easton, Pennsylvania, examines the suit. It's part of the Living Seas exhibit at Walt Disney World's Epcot Center, in Florida.*

At the Living Seas, you can stand inside the world's largest saltwater aquarium without getting wet. That's because the aquarium is shaped like a giant doughnut. From a platform in the middle, you can watch six thousand fish and other sea creatures. They leap, swim, drift, and crawl in six million gallons of water. This underwater wonderland lets you see the sea as a diver would. It's part of Walt Disney World's Epcot Center, in Lake Buena Vista, Florida.

The aquarium at the Living Seas is so big that it could hold 54 Olympic-size swimming pools. Inside it, you find tropical fish and many other marine animals from the Caribbean Sea. Engineers at the exhibit have created an artificial ocean by adding salt and other important elements to well water and pumping it into the aquarium. Like ocean water, the aquarium water is always in motion. Pumps constantly move unclean water to a treatment center. It is cleaned, tested, and returned to

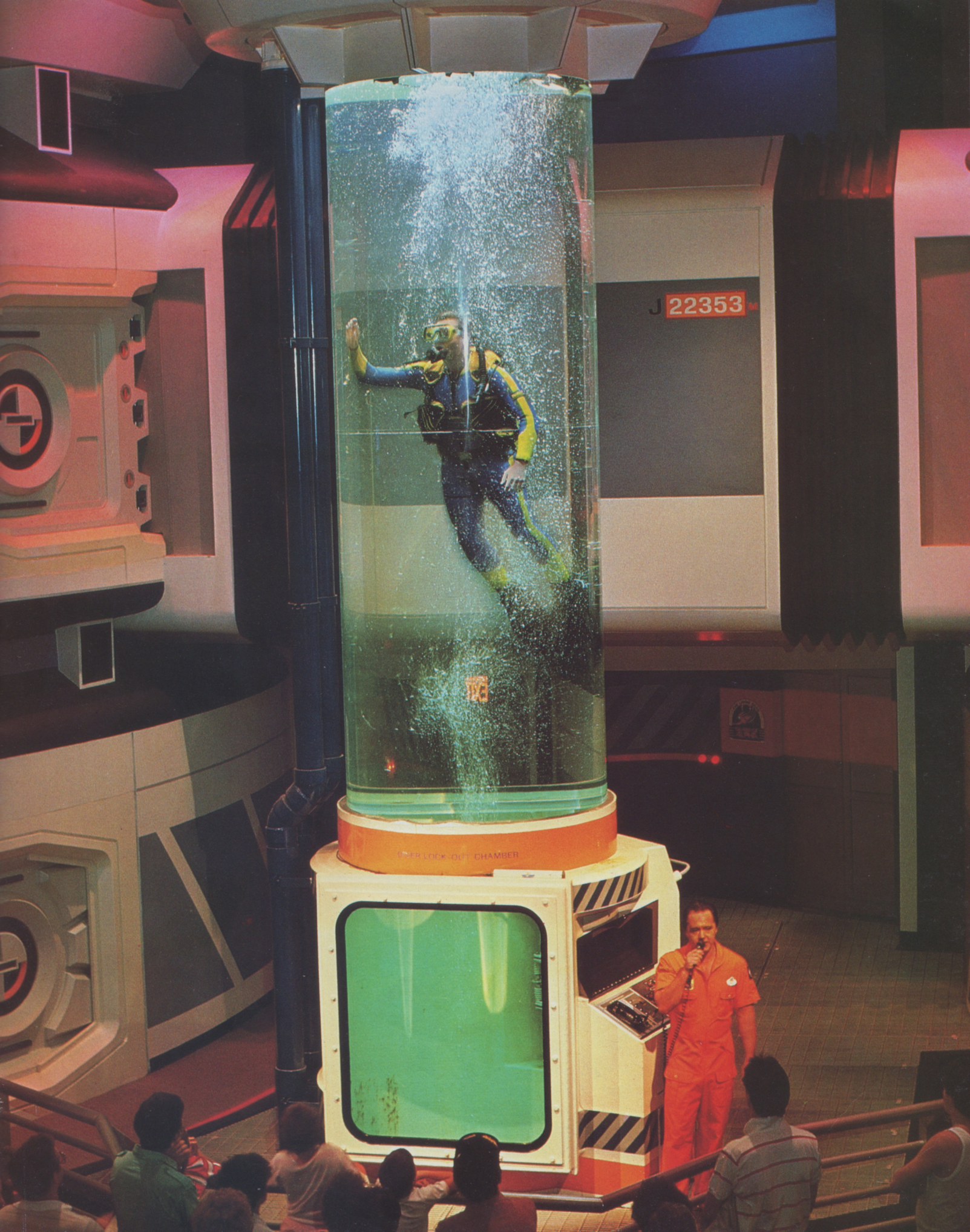


LIKE A GRACEFUL BIRD, *a spotted eagle ray glides past the Living Seas observation deck. About six thousand marine animals from tropical waters live in this huge aquarium, which contains an artificial reef.*



DOUGHNUT DESIGN. *The main aquarium in the exhibit has a circular shape. In this architect's drawing (above), part of the roof has been raised to show the design. Visitors watch the marine animals from an observation deck in the middle of the aquarium. The smaller displays, at left, hold dolphins and diving gear.*

GOING UP. *On his way to the aquarium, a diver rises through a clear lockout chamber (right). He carries his air supply in a tank on his back. The diver enters the chamber when it's empty. After water fills the chamber, the diver swims up toward the aquarium entrance. Nearby, a Living Seas host answers visitors' questions.*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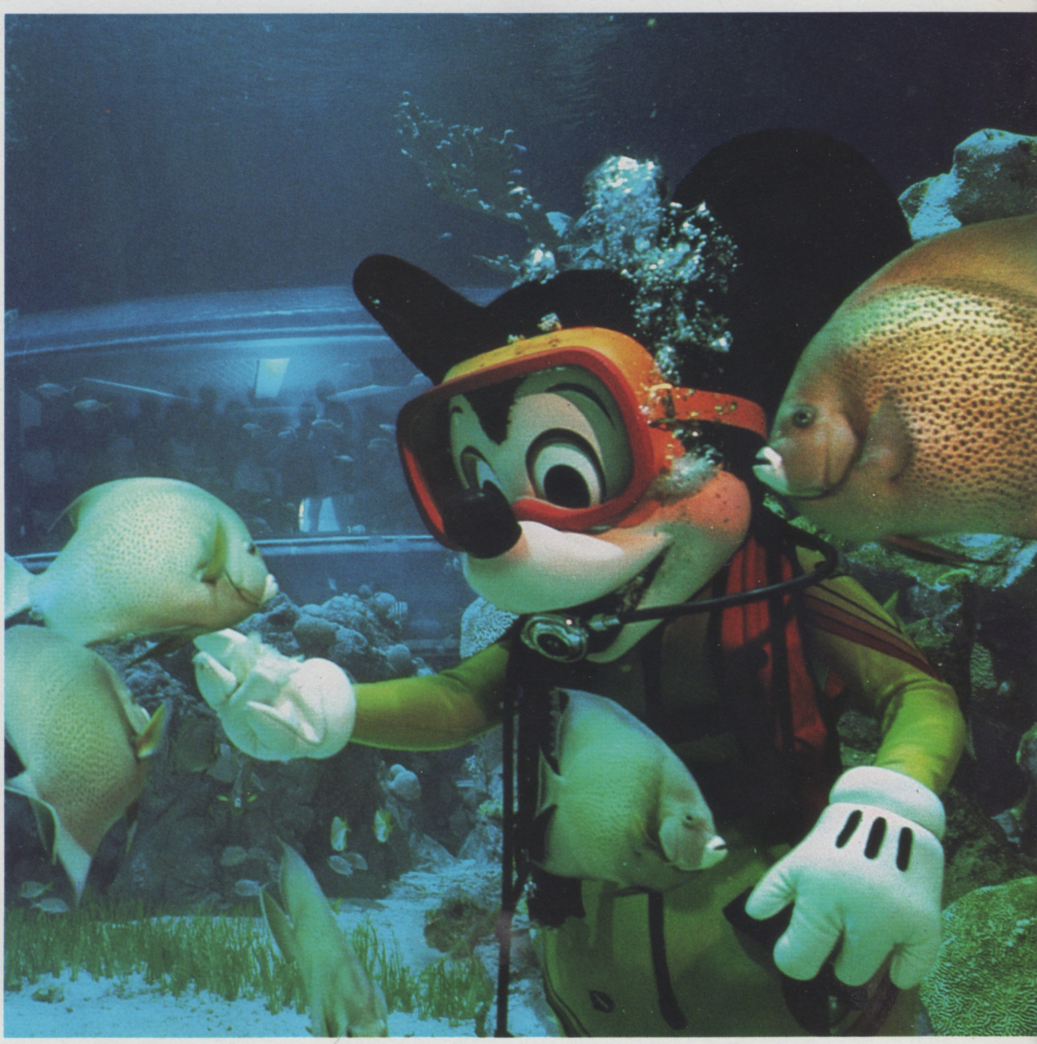
the tank. The whole process takes less than three hours.

Although the giant aquarium is the main attraction at the Living Seas, it isn't the only one. You can also watch researchers at work with dolphins. A display of diving equipment shows how undersea exploration has changed over nearly three centuries. Visitors learn that in 1690, a diver with a glass bell over his head could breathe trapped air during a short walk in shallow water. Today, wearing a pressurized suit, a diver can descend more than 1,500 feet with a 72-hour supply of air.

Visitors look to the future, too. They see divers cultivating seaweed called kelp, which may help feed the world's people. They watch a mini-sub in action. They see divers using air-filled underwater resting chambers. Departing visitors have a better understanding of how important it is to take care of the sea and the life in it.

CHOW TIME. *Divers with food draw a crowd of fish. To tempt the appetites of more than a hundred kinds of marine animals, the Living Seas staff prepares 260 pounds of food each day. Many of the animals have special needs. For example, parrot fish normally nibble hard coral. In the aquarium, they get fish meal mixed with dental plaster as a crunchy treat.*

WITH A FRIENDLY NUZZLE, *two bottlenose dolphins greet a scientist (above). Visitors watch scientists in this tank working with marine mammals. The researchers keep track of dolphin growth rates and study the animals to learn more about their internal body structures.*



HI THERE, MICKEY! *A diver in a costume familiar to children of all ages hands out snacks to fish (right). Mickey Mouse visits the aquarium on special occasions. Although there are many unusual creatures in the water, it's the diving mouse that usually gets the most attention from visitors.*